

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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TAGS: PINT, PFOR, RP
SUBJECT: SECOND SESSION OF BATASAN BAYAN

SUMMARY: BATASAN BAYAN (LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY BODY) MET DEC 17-18 AND HEARD REPORTS FROM PRESIDENT MARCOS AND OTHER CABINET MEMBERS. CHAIRMAN OF COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS, REPORTING ON OCTOBER REFERENDUM, CLAIMED THERE NO CONSENSUS ON WHEN ELECTIONS FOR LEGISLATURE SHOULD BE HELD OR WHETHER THEY SHOULD BE DIRECT OR INDIRECT. BATASAN BAYAN THEN DECIDED THAT THERE SHOULD BE NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS AT BARANGAY LEVEL ON THIS QUESTION. PRESIDENT MARCOS DOES NOT SEEM KEEN ON DIRECT ELECTIONS FOR NEW LEGISLATURE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HE MAY EVEN TRANSFORM CURRENT BATASAN BAYAN INTO BATASAN PAMBANSA AFTER PRO FORMA CONSULTATIONS WITH THE PEOPLE. END SUMMARY.

1. BATASAN BAYAN (LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY BODY) MET FOR ITS SECOND SESSION AT PHILIPPINE CONVENTION CENTER DEC 17-18. PRESIDENT MARCOS REPORTED ON (A) CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH MNLF IN LIBYA; (B) ECONOMIC SITUATION; (C) POLITICAL SITUATION IN WAKE OF OCTOBER REFERENDUM; AND (D) BASES NEGOTIATIONS (SEE MANILA 19553). IN ADDITION TO PRESIDENT, NEDA DIRECTOR GENERAL SICAT, ENERGY DEVELOPMENT BOARD CHAIRMAN VELASCO AND SECRETARY OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NATIONAL DEFENSE ENRILE ALL REPORTED TO BODY. TONE OF THEIR STATEMENTS SOMBER WITH ALL STRESSING DIFFICULT ECONOMIC SITUATION RESULTING FROM OPEC OIL INCREASE AND CONTINUED DEPRESSED PRICES FOR PHILIPPINE PRIME COMMODITIES (SEE MANILA 19594). ENRILE WARNED THAT IN VIEW THESE PROBLEMS SUBVERSIVES WOULD MAKE EVEN GREATER ATTEMPT TO MOBILIZE

DISSIDENTS IN LABOR, STUDENT AND RELIGIOUS SECTORS,
AS WELL AS RIGHTIST GROUPS AND MINDANAO SECESSIONISTS.
GUIDED PRESS HAS EMPHASIZED ENRILE'S WARNING WITH
EDITORIALS URGING CITIZENRY REMAIN VIGILANT AND
COOPERATE WITH GOVERNMENT DURING TRYING ECONOMIC TIMES.

2. LEONARDO PEREZ, COMMISSIONER OF ELECTIONS, PRESENTED
LENGTHY REPORT ON OCTOBER REFERENDUM. PEREZ ADMITTED
THAT ONLY 28 PERCENT OF THOSE PARTICIPATING IN THE REFERENDUM
HAD USED THE REMARKS SHEETS WHEREIN THEY WERE ASKED TO
SUGGEST DATE FOR ELECTIONS TO BATASAN PAMBANSA AND
INDICATE WHETHER ELECTIONS SHOULD BE DIRECT OR INDIRECT.
ACCORDING TO PEREZ, ONLY 49 0/0 OF THOSE WHO USED THE
REMARKS SHEETS ACTUALLY COMMENTED ON THE ELECTION
QUESTION. ABOUT 30 0/0 INDICATED THAT BEFORE ANY ELECTIONS
THERE SHOULD BE INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH THE BARANGAYS
AND THAT MATTERS SHOULD BE LEFT "UP TO THE PRESIDENT."
PEREZ CONCLUDED THAT THIS SUGGESTED A TREND BUT "NOT A
FIRM CONSENSUS" IN FAVOR OF INDIRECT ELECTIONS.

3. BATASAN BAYAN DECIDED THAT DLGCD CONSULT WITH THE
BARANGAYS ABOUT KIND OF ELECTIONS AND TIMING.
THE "CONSULTATION" IS BEING UNDERTAKEN BY THE NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF BARANGAYS AND THE YOUTH BARANGAYS UNDER
DLGCD GUIDELINES. CHAIRMAN PEREZ TOLD PRESS DEC 20
THAT UNDER THE DIRECT ELECTION METHOD "WE RUN THE RISK OF RE-
VIVING THE SAME OLD PRACTICES THAT UNDERMINE THE WILL OF THE
PEOPLE," AND SUGGESTED DIRECT ELECTIONS " AN EXPENSIVE
AND UNMANAGEABLE PROCESS, EXPECIALLY IN A SOCIETY LIKE
OURS."

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4. DEC 20 DAILY EXPRESS EDITORIAL PRAISES BATASAN BAYAN
FOR SUBMITTING ELECTION QUESTION TO BARANGAYS, ADDING THAT
THERE HAVE BEEN MANY IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE
OCTOBER REFERENDUM AND THAT "ANY DECISION ON THE HOLDING
OF A NATIONAL ELECTION AT THIS TIME BE MADE IN THE
CONTEXT OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS." EXPRESS EDITORIALIST
REVIEWS NOW FAMILIAR CATALOG OF PROBLEMS, INCLUDING
OIL PRICE HIKE, MUSLIM REBELLION AND INVOLVEMENT OF
CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS IN THE INSURGENCY MOVEMENT.
EXPRESS WONDERS WHETHER EXPENSIVE NATIONAL ELECTION
WOULD BE JUSTIFIED IN THESE DIFFICULT TIMES AND WHETHER
IT WOULD EVEN BE ABLE TO BE HALD IN PARTS OF THE
COUNTRY "CONSTANTLY HARASSED BY INSURGENTS NOT ONLY
THROUGH VIOLENT MEANS, BUT THROUGH SUBTLE PROPAGANDA."

5. COMMENT: BATASAN BAYAN'S SECOND SESSION WENT AS
SMOOTHLY AS THE FIRST WITH PRESIDENT MARCOS GUIDING THE

PROCEEDINGS EVERY STEP OF THE WAY. YOUTH MEMBERS (10 ARE UNDER 18) WERE ACTIVE IN THE DISCUSSIONS, ALTHOUGH THEY ALL WERE OBVIOUSLY READING FROM SCRIPT. STATEMENT BY CHAIRMAN PEREZ, TENOR OF DISCUSSIONS IN THE BATASAN AND EXPRESS EDITORIAL ALL SUGGEST MARCOS MAY HAVE ABANDONED ANY THOUGHT HE HAD OF DIRECT ELECTIONS FOR BATASAN PAMBANSA IN 1977. PRESUMABLY PRESIDENT WOULD VIEW SUCH ELECTIONS, WHICH WOULD REQUIRE RIGOROUS SUPERVISION TO INSURE DESIRED RESULTS, AS A DISTRACTION IN TIME OF POSSIBLE ECONOMIC DISLOCATION. THUS BARANGAY CONSULTATIONS IN JANUARY WILL PROBABLY RESULT IN RECOMMENDATION FOR INDIRECT ELECTION PROBABLY THROUGH BARANGAY REPRESENTATIVES. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT CONCEPT OF ELECTORAL COLLEGE OF BARANGAY MEMBERS HAS BEEN SUGGESTED BY SOME OF MARCOS' POLITICAL ADVISERS. EVEN WITHOUT INDIRECT ELECTIONS, PRESIDENT MAY BE MOVING TOWARD TRANSFORMING BATASAN BAYAN INTO BATASAN PAMBANSA SIMPLY BY EXERCISE IN NOMENCLATURE. MARCOS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TOLD BODY: "THE FACT IS THAT THE BATASAN PAMBANSA OF AN INTERIM CHARACTER IS NOW IN THE PROCESS OF ORGANIZATION AND WILL SOON BEGIN TO LEGISLATE FOR OUR PEOPLE." SULLIVAN

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